

# Australian Garden

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## HISTORY

*Darwin and Australia  
Weed assemblages  
Conference report*





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A selection of the properties visited during the AGHS 2008 Annual National Conference: (from top to bottom) Summerlees, Sutton Forest; pool pavilion and pool designed by architect Guilford Bell, Retford Park, Bowral; and Milton Park, also in Bowral (see conference report on page 26).

**Cover:** Silhouette of pioneering Hobart Town seed merchant J.W. Davis and an early letter from London seed merchant Jacob Wrench (see story on page 9). [Davis and Pullman family collection]

# *From the Chair*

## *Colleen Morris*

Appreciating the underlying geology, the topography, and the variety in the landscape of the Southern Highlands in NSW was one of the treats of our annual conference, which was held in Bowral at Oxley College, Burradoo. As we toured around, visiting historic and more recent gardens, and experiencing town and country, there was little doubt that garden making is a major focus of the area.

Tim North was integral to the establishment of the AGHS Southern Highlands Branch and his concise and salutary keynote address at the conference is printed in this issue. Twenty years ago Tim published *Gardens of the Southern Highlands, New South Wales 1828–1988*. In the context of the rich gardening tradition which that book presented and the obvious contemporary interest in gardens, it was appalling to hear that of the 32 gardens featured in 1988, ‘seven have disappeared completely and only six remain in anything like their original condition’.

Tim’s address highlights the importance in documenting the gardens of our local areas in addition to enjoying garden visits. For many gardeners, their enjoyment is in creating new gardens, rather than maintaining old ones. Our continuing challenge is to educate the broader community in the value of the unfashionable in gardens and the creativity required to manage old, established gardens and estates.

Communication and education are essential but quiet (and not so quiet) advocacy is another means to achieve a heightened awareness of the value of gardens or garden elements. Many AGHS members find they need to add vigilance and tenacity to an interest in garden history. At any time during a year there will at least one of our branches advocating for a landscape or garden under threat. For over 15 years the Sydney and Northern NSW Branch has been urging the City of Sydney to refurbish the John Baptist Fountain, one of Australia’s oldest extant locally made fountains, which was moved to Hyde Park in 1888. The conservation of the surviving centrepiece has been completed and we now wait to see the next stage of the fountain’s refurbishment.

In February 2009 our inaugural Chairman and first Patron, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, will celebrate her 100th birthday. An exemplary gardener, Dame Elisabeth has nurtured many charities, individuals requiring assistance, and not-for-profit organisations in this country, and she has contributed much to enrich Australia’s cultural and intellectual life. The Australian Garden History Society applauds our very special centenarian member.

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# 'From Wilderness to Pleasure Ground'

Tim North

This opening address of the Australian Garden History Society's 29th annual national conference was delivered at Bowral on 10 October 2008 by garden writer, editor, and publisher Tim North.

The Australian Garden History Society was started 28 years ago. Much has been achieved during this time, and there is still more to do.

Historic gardens are fragile elements of our national heritage, for being largely organic they are subject to the usual growth and decay. They are subject to assault from many sides—from financial ones to changes from life style to fashions, and to the ever-present threat, what passes as modern development.

This region of the Southern Highlands has a particularly rich heritage of fine old gardens, highlighted by the conference theme 'From Wilderness to Pleasure Ground'. In mind no doubt was Governor Lachlan Macquarie's comment when he first surveyed the area in 1820, describing it with considerable foresight as 'a fine extensive pleasure ground'.

I want to make just one comment by way of introduction, that it was primarily the balmy climate of the Highlands, as opposed to the squalid atmosphere of late nineteenth-century Sydney, which carved it the title 'Sanitarium of the South', and it was this that attracted to it many wealthy people who proceeded to build grand houses and gardens.

One such person was Sir John Lackey, who in 1880 purchased what was then described as 45 acres of rough grasslands and established his estate there, naming it Elvo. Lackey later sold it to a Sydney solicitor Arthur Allen, who suffered from ill health and whose doctor advised him to recuperate at Elvo, but he never liked the place and seldom went there. In 1959 it became the De La Salle seminary and then, when it opened in 1982, part of Oxley College—venue for this conference.

Another was the Hon. Arthur Bruce Smith, who having built his mansion Yean House in the area now called Burradoo, decided it was far to far to go all the way to Bowral to catch the train, so he had built his own private railway station,

just outside his front gate so he could more conveniently board a train there. The railway station is still there today, and bears the name Burradoo, but no train stopped there for many years after.

I should also mention the Hon. J. Macintosh, who is best remembered for being the first person in the district to install a flushing toilet. His garden known as Laurel Park was notable for being surrounded by several miles of hawthorn hedges. Gardens tended to be large in those days. My own little book, *Gardens of the Southern Highlands*, published in 1988 as a Bicentennial Project for the Wingecarribee Committee and the Wingecarribee Shire Council with the help of Jane Cavanough and Anthea Prell, describes 32 such gardens. Of these seven have disappeared completely and only six remain in anything like their original condition.

Yes, much remains to be done and perhaps I may be permitted to make just two suggestions about these, on which I believe this Society could now focus its attention.

Firstly, detailed documentation of selected gardens is a necessary prelude to any plan for their conservation or restoration. I am aware that valuable work has been done in both Braidwood and the Monaro district, and also in Victoria and elsewhere. But I am sure the expertise and facilities exist for more to be done.

The second concerns communication. We have today the means of communications undreamed of not so many years ago, and I believe these should be used to spread the message in plain but direct terms to those tens of thousands of dedicated garden lovers, about the real or impending plight of so many of our fine old gardens. I hope that you will all find the next few days not only enjoyable but more importantly rewarding, and so it gives me great pleasure to declare open the 29th annual national conference of the Australian Garden History Society.

# *Charles Darwin, gardens, and Australia*

## *Patrick Armstrong*

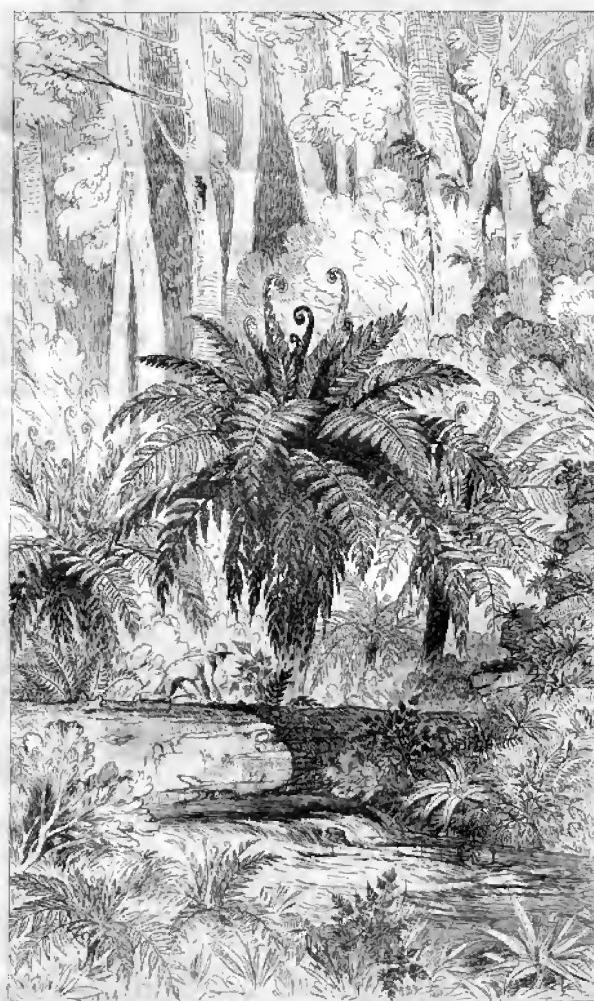
2009 marks the bicentenary of Charles Darwin's birth and the sesquicentenary of his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin spent three months in Australia during 1836 before his return on the HMS *Beagle* to a lifetime of research and writing in London, and at his 'Outdoor Laboratory', Down House.

Charles Darwin, the bicentenary of whose birth is celebrated in February 2009, the sesquicentenary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, following in November of the same year, spent several weeks in Australia, in early 1836, during the circumnavigation of HMS *Beagle*. After spending Christmas in New Zealand, the ship spent part of January in Port Jackson (Darwin comments of ships being dressed overall on the anniversary of the founding of the colony of New South Wales—the precursor to Australia Day), then a few days in Hobart Town, before touching briefly at King George's Sound in the south-west of Western Australia in March. Interested in gardens and gardening throughout much of his life, he briefly commented, in his diary and note-books, on those he saw in the three Australian colonies he visited.

Although he did not particularly like Australia, he was immensely interested in many of the things that he saw, some of which were of great importance in the subsequent development of his ideas. He ventured some way inland in New South Wales on horseback that hot, hot January. His little notebook contains the scribbled note that on riding about Bathurst he 'saw nothing'. There was a small detachment of British soldiers in the town, and Charles met, and seems to have stayed with a Captain Chetwoode; Darwin reported that the Captain's attempts at gardening were 'quite heart-breaking'; the 'sirocco-like' wind, damaged the 'young apples, peaches and grapes ... The Officers all seemed very weary of this place & I am not surprised'.

His impression of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) was much more favourable. The upper slopes were covered with 'a light wood', but the lower slopes of Mount Wellington were criss-crossed with a network of field-boundaries, probably reminding him of parts of the English and Welsh countryside with which he was familiar. The climate was more moist, Darwin noted, and he thought the soils

more fertile than those of New South Wales. 'The cultivated fields look well', he summarised, 'and the gardens abound with thriving vegetable and fruit trees', in marked contrast to the pathetic attempts at gardening by the soldiers of the garrison at Bathurst.



This fern valley depicts typical scenery explored by Charles Darwin on his visit to Hobart Town early in 1836. The engraving is taken from the publication of Darwin's contemporary, the Quaker visitor and nursery proprietor, James Backhouse, who visited Van Diemen's Land only four years earlier.



Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (PXC 294 f27)

Conrad Martens, who had traveled aboard the *Beagle*, produced many sketches documenting places which Darwin visited, including this ‘View of Sydney from Bunkers Hill’ (dated 2 July 1836) taken from a sketchbook of pencil views (1834–36).

From Van Diemen’s Land the little ship had a fairly stormy sailing across the Great Australian Bight to the tiny settlement of King George’s Sound, comprising just a few dozen houses clinging to the isolated shore of the south-west of the continent. The little colony was administered by the Government Resident, Sir Richard Spencer, retired naval officer, who lived with his family in a ‘small but comfortable farm house’—now called the Old Farm at Strawberry Hill, Albany. Sir Richard had only lived there since 1833, but there was a thriving garden with oranges, asparagus, gooseberries, and raspberries. Charles Darwin and the captain of the *Beagle*, Robert FitzRoy, called on Sir Richard, and discussed the *Beagle*’s hydrographic survey programme.

But the young naturalist’s observations on gardens in Australia, interesting though they are, were more cursory and less significant than some of his annotations about other, natural environments. Of the tangled forest on the flanks of Mount Wellington:

*In many parts the Eucalypti grew to a great size, and composed a noble forest. In some of the dampest ravines, tree-ferns flourished in an extraordinary manner; I saw one which was at least twenty feet to the base of the fronds, and was in girth exactly six feet. The fronds forming the most elegant of parasols, produced a gloomy shade, like that of the first hour of the night. [Charles Darwin, Journal of Researches (London, 1839).]*

Darwin had the remarkable skill of describing a whole environment—or what would now be called an ecosystem—with the various links that existed within it. He collected a variety of insects in the forest, and other invertebrates that thrived on the damp, green, shady environment such as flatworms or *Planaria*. He noted burying beetles in Van Diemen’s Land, and the manner in which they buried animal dung, comparing them with the beetles that filled this ‘ecological niche’ in other environments.

*Darwin had the remarkable skill of describing a whole environment—or what would now be called an ecosystem*

He compared the gloomy, moist Vandemonian forests with the dry, burnt woodland of New South Wales he had seen a few weeks before. Inland from Sydney, Darwin travelled for several days through an open forest of eucalypts, acacias, and casurinas, often burnt. He had been seeking emu and kangaroo, and had seen flocks of cockatoos and parrots, and described a kangaroo-rat. He had encountered Aboriginal groups hunting. He was conscious of travelling through a community of plants and animals the like of which he had never seen before.

The she-oaks and gum-trees with their vertical leaves—an adaptation to the climate, he thought—the importance of fire, the soils, Aboriginal people, distinctive birds, the emus, kangaroos, and the kangaroo-rat were components of an integrated system.

*the manner in which Darwin  
perceived whole environments in  
all of the localities he visited were  
important to his later work*

Darwin was a first-class observer and note-taker; he knew how to compare different environments, and make deductions from his comparisons: ‘The habit of comparison leads to generalisation’, he wrote towards the end of the voyage. The comparisons he made in Australia, the way in which he noticed that plants and animals were exquisitely adapted, and the manner in which he perceived *whole environments* in all of the localities he visited were important to his later work.

After several years of living in ‘odious, noisy, smoky’ London on his return from the sea (one of the rented houses in which he lived seems to have had little in the garden apart from a dead dog) he

moved with his young family to Down House (no ‘e’), in the quiet village of Downe (with ‘e’) in the chalk country of Kent, not too far from London, in 1842.

When the family moved in, the house was said to be plain and unattractive: ‘a square brick building of three storeys with shabby whitewash’. The surroundings were open and somewhat bleak. Soon after the family moved in, however, Charles had the adjoining lane lowered, and a high flint wall constructed, so that the property was not overlooked; bay windows were built out on the garden side of the house, extending up the entire three storeys; further building work took place in 1843, in 1858, and again in the 1870s. Nowadays the house gives the impression of a fair-sized, but not particularly grand, English country house, for the most-part whitewashed, somewhat austere in its appearance from the front, but much more appealing, and sheltered by trees, when viewed from the garden to the rear of the property.

This large garden, although some of the trees have now gone, in many respects still resembles the garden that Charles Darwin knew, and in which his many children and grandchildren played. (It is now open to the public, managed by English Heritage). One of his daughters, Henrietta, recalled:



English Heritage Photo Library

Darwin’s property Down House, at Downe in Kent, is now managed by English Heritage. In anticipation of anniversary events the property has been the subject of major conservation works. This has included considerable work in the gardens, which can now be interpreted as they might have appeared during Darwin’s occupancy.

*Many gardens are more beautiful but few could have a greater charm, and nowhere do I know one where it was so pleasant to sit out. The flower-beds were under the drawing room windows, and were filled with hardy herbaceous plants, intermixed with bedded-out plants and annuals. It was often untidy but had a particularly gay and varied effect. On the lawn were two yew-trees where the children had their swing. Beyond the row of lime-trees was the orchard, and a long walk bordered with flowering shrubs led through the kitchen garden to the ‘Sand-Walk’. This consisted of a strip of wood planted by my father with varied trees, many being wild cherries and birches, and on one side bordered with hollies. At one end was an old pit, out of which the sand was dug the sand which gave [the path which surrounded the strip of woodland] its name. The walk on one side was always sheltered from the sun and wind, the other sunny, with an outlook over the quiet valley on to the woods beyond, but windy when it blew from the north and east. Here we children played, and here my father took his pacings for forty or more years.* [H. Litchfield (ed.), *Emma Darwin: a century of family letters, 1792–1896* (London, 1915).]

Close to the house a mulberry, said to have been planted in 1609 was described by Darwin's granddaughter, Gwen Raverat, in her account of Down House in the late 1880s and 1890s:

*A great old mulberry tree grew right up against the windows. The shadows of the leaves used to shift about on the white floor, and you could hear the plop of the ripe mulberries as they fell to the ground, and the blackbirds sang there in the early mornings.* [Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece: a Cambridge childhood* (London, 1952), Chapter 8.]

But not only was the garden at Down a locale for his children and grandchildren to play, and for Charles to take his ‘thinking walks’, but an important laboratory for serious scientific experiments. In a greenhouse he undertook detailed studies on the pollination of plants (particularly orchids) and on the habits of insectivorous and climbing plants. A ‘wormstone’, close to the house, attached to measuring instruments, measured the rate at which earthworms buried the surface of the soil. His sons—several of them becoming distinguished scientists themselves—collected beetles as he had done himself decades before

in the Shropshire countryside. From his nearby study letters came and went from and to a network of correspondents all over the world, including a number in Australia: for example from the Western Australian Colonial Botanist, James Drummond, came information on the beautiful blue *Lechenaultia*, and its pollination and reproductive strategy. One of the vehicles Darwin frequently used for publishing his researches (and circulating requests for information) was the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, a periodical to which he subscribed for years.

*The same eye for detail, and integrative ability that Darwin showed ... while aboard the Beagle were in use in the garden, greenhouse, and study in the last 40 years of his life*

The same eye for detail, and integrative ability that he showed in his explorations in Australia, South America, and the Pacific while aboard the *Beagle* were in use in the garden, greenhouse, and study in the last 40 years of his life. He showed these qualities, as a young explorer, in his appreciation of the relationships amongst fire, the tree species, soils and topography, climate, the Indigenous peoples, the marsupials, and the invertebrates of the Australian bush. He used the same integrative ideas and striking powers of observation, in middle and later life, when as the Squire of Downe he went on to untangle the mysteries of life itself.

**Patrick Armstrong** is Adjunct Associate Professor of Geography at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. His book *All Things Darwin* was published by Greenwood (Connecticut) in October 2007 and *Darwin's Luck: change and fortune in the life and work of Charles Darwin* will be published by Continuum (London) in February 2009. His earlier book *Darwin's Other Islands* (Continuum, 2004), describes Charles Darwin's visits to Australia in some detail.

# *James Wentworth Davis: pioneering seed merchant of Hobart Town*

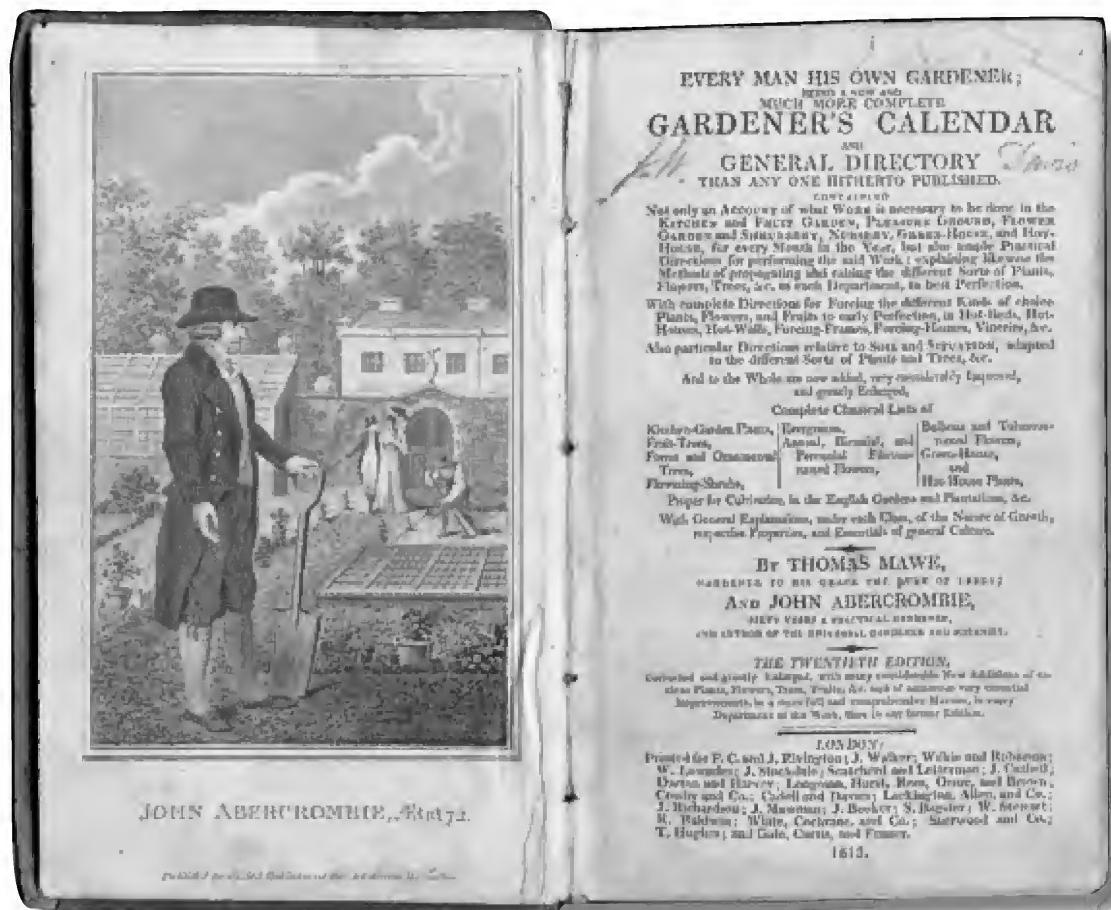
*Sandra Pullman*

James Wentworth Davis was amongst the earliest seed merchants of Hobart Town and his efforts to establish the business reveal much of the vicissitudes of early colonial life.

Researching your ancestors can be an extremely rewarding pastime, especially when your great great grandfather was a pioneering Australian seed merchant. Family lore told me that James Wentworth Davis had migrated to Van Diemen's Land from Ireland in 1831–32 while surviving books and other documents revealed the bare outlines of his colonial career. Then in 1982 my mother Ettie Pullman published a detailed family history entitled *The Came from the Mall*, being

an account of the lives of Davis and his wife Sophia Letitia (*n e* Jones).

No date of birth has yet been established for J.W. Davis, but from evidence contained in an 1829 petition he was living in and apparently farming tobacco near Sligo in the Irish country of that name. In a letter to Davis, the Right Hon. Charles Grant, M.P. (later Lord Glenelg, Secretary for the Colonies in 1835–38), advised that the



*Every Man his own Gardener* formed a popular gardening handbook of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and was a well used volume in the library of J.W. Davis. The genesis of this book's authorship is told in an earlier issue (see *Australian Garden History*, 8 (3), 1996, p.12).

parliamentarians had decided not to present petitions from other Irish tobacco growers (aimed at thwarting a prohibition bill) and concluded rather pointedly: ‘Under the circumstances you may perhaps think it right not to stir the question’. Instead the matter was referred to a House of Commons Select Committee. The Commissioner for Excise, Mr Thomas Harrison, stated to the Committee that Mr Davis of Sligo had six acres, and the ‘Return of Tobacco Cultivated in Ireland for 1829’ lists the villages of Ballinode and Rusheen for the county of Sligo, so it is possible that they were the fields of J.W. Davis’s operations.

*Davis family tradition has it that  
‘Our people left Ireland because of  
the harsh political climate and a  
blight on the tobacco’*

Davis family tradition has it that ‘Our people left Ireland because of the harsh political climate and a blight on the tobacco’ so it is no surprise that the next evidence of life in Sligo comes in the form of letters of recommendation for James and Sophia as intending emigrants to Van Diemen’s Land. Dated October 1831, these letters paint the picture of a well respected and hard-working family. The local bank manager bears testimony to ‘exemplary conduct during your residence in this place’; the parish priest praises Davis as ‘a very correct and Gentleman-like individual ... very generally respected by all classes here’ (an opinion endorsed by the local bishop); while a local worthy affixes his signature to a testimonial document—sadly no longer extant—and doubts not that ‘you will very speedily attain, that place, and station in society, which an amiable and respected private character so justly entitles you to’.

And so James and Sophia Davis and their only surviving child (James Wentworth Davis jnr) left Sligo in 1831 in search of a better life for themselves, well distant from political unrest as well as the threat of a cholera epidemic (which it is believed claimed a daughter).

They sailed in the ship *Lindsay*, stopping at Greenock (Scotland), and Rio de Janeiro, before arriving at Hobart Town in June 1832. On arrival and for nearly a year the family lodged at a boarding house (formerly the British Hotel) in Hobart’s Liverpool Street. Sophia brought talents as a musician and singer, and within a week of arrival she advertised her skills in musical education and ‘that she intends giving instructions in Italian and English singing, Piano Forte, Guitar and also in Sacred Music’ (*Hobart Town Courier*,



James Wentworth Davis appears to be a man of about forty in this silhouette, making it a rare early colonial example of this form of portraiture (especially popular in the era before photography).

29 June 1832). A concert was also spoken of and, after a little misunderstanding with another local artist was smoothed over, a program commencing with the overture ‘Caliph of Bagdad’ (Boieldieu) and concluding with ‘God Save the King’ (arr. Stephenson) took place at the court house.

*By July 1833 J.W. Davis was  
leasing the 400-acre property  
Waverly Park at Kangaroo Point*

By July 1833 J.W. Davis was leasing the 400-acre property Waverly Park at Kangaroo Point (north of the present-day suburb of Bellerive) from whence his wife soon advertised her musical tuition. The property was owned by colonial surgeon James Scott but without detailed records it is difficult to say with any certainty what was

Mr. L. M. Davis London 22 July 1831

Bought of Jacob Wrench & Sons.

S. W. D. Hobart Town STEAMERCLAW, London Bridge.

1. 2. 10.	Red (lawn)	g. L. 30
2. 4. 10.	White (lawn)	g. L. 32.10
5. 5.	Yellow (lawn)	g. L. 9 -
6. 6.	Orange (lawn)	g. L. 8. 8 -
7. 7.	Red (lawn)	g. L. 10 -
1.	Liftohm's camomile	g. L. 10 -
7. 2. Blue Peacock	g. L. 114	
2. Blue Cockfoot	g. L. 11	
2. Blue Bird's Eye	g. L. 1.	
1. Blue Thistle	g. L. 7 -	
Plants Only (total)		
Flowers	g. L. 14.9	
Flowers	g. L. 15.80	
Flowers & Thistles	g. L. 12.6	
1. Peacock	g. L. 10 -	
Twelve feet Janice	g. L. 117.8. 2	
Bill of Lading with Receipts		
g. L. 117.8. 2		

This 1834 invoice from Jacob Wrench & Sons, seed merchants of London Bridge, provided James Davis with the nucleus of stock when he commenced his Hobart Town seed warehouse. Apart from its seminal importance to Davis and his business, it is also significant as part of the diffuse early surviving documentation of the Australian seed and nursery trade.

grown. A vegetable garden, orchard, and some small-scale cropping seem the most likely in light of a report published the following May:

*Mr Davies [sic] of Waverly park, Kangaroo point, has obliged us with a fine head of maize grown in his garden at that place, though the season generally speaking has been unpropitious. The same gentleman has also raised a quantity of very fine large leaved tobacco, a plant which, being exceedingly useful as a dressing to our flocks, seeing how readily it grows in all parts of the island, and how easy it is prepared for the purpose, we are surprised is not much more generally cultivated than it is. The Schiraz [sic] tobacco lately introduced is by far the hardiest and most productive variety. The climate is so congenial to it, that it remains in bloom the whole year through.* (*Hobart Town Courier*, 9 May 1834)

In October 1834 Davis published his first advertisement for tobacco: 'For Sale./Excellent Colonial Tobacco fit for Sheep Wash. Apply to the undersigned./J.W. Davis./22, Liverpool street.' (*Hobart Town Courier*, 17 October 1834) His city address indicated that these premises were in use for commercial purposes, and it was here also that Sophia gave her music lessons. Evidence of the commencement of Davis's business also comes from an invoice dated 22 July 1834 (still in the Davis family possession). On the rear is a letter from London seed merchant Jacob Wrench, who explains: 'We hand you [the] annex'd

## IMPROVED CULTURE

or

## Ribes Grossularia,

That pleasant and useful Fruit,

## THE GOOSEBERRY.

and to say we are extremely happy to hear of his very great success and wish him and his Family many years of health & happiness to enjoy it.'

Life in Hobart Town was always full of interest for Davis and his family, especially with the need to manage several properties. Amongst the family's shipboard possessions were the aforementioned testimonials and a small library of books, possibly including several volumes still in the possession of descendants. These include *Every Man his own Gardener* (London, 1813), the well-known handbook written by John Abercrombie (but originally credited to his more influential colleague Thomas Mawe, gardener to the Duke of Leeds), and a little work by Thomas Haynes, *A Treatise on the Improved Culture of the Strawberry, Raspberry, and Gooseberry* (London, 1812).

From Wrench's invoice it can be seen that Davis received a large quantity of grass seeds and these were duly advertised for sale on 16 January 1835 at new premises, signalling the start of an ambitious commercial venture. Located at 23 Elizabeth Street, Sophia opened a New Music & Stationery Warehouse', while James styled his business 'Farm, Garden, Flower, and Indigenous Seed Warehouse'. The Wrench agricultural seeds were supplemented by 'a choice selection of all kinds of *Garden, Flower, and Farm Seeds*, likewise a large variety of the *indigenous* seeds of this Colony'. These latter, upwards of a hundred and twenty different specimens 'of the most rare plants' had been collected 'with the greatest care, and put up in boxes by Mr Davidson, late Superintendent of Government Garden' (see *Australian Garden History*, 20 (2), 2008 p.22, for the story of Davidson's dismissal).

Competition was tough. Auctioneers, MacDougall and Stracey announced in the *Hobart Town Courier* in early April 1835 that 90 types of

## IMPROVED

## Culture of Rubus Idaeus,

THAT MUCH-ADMIRED FRUIT.

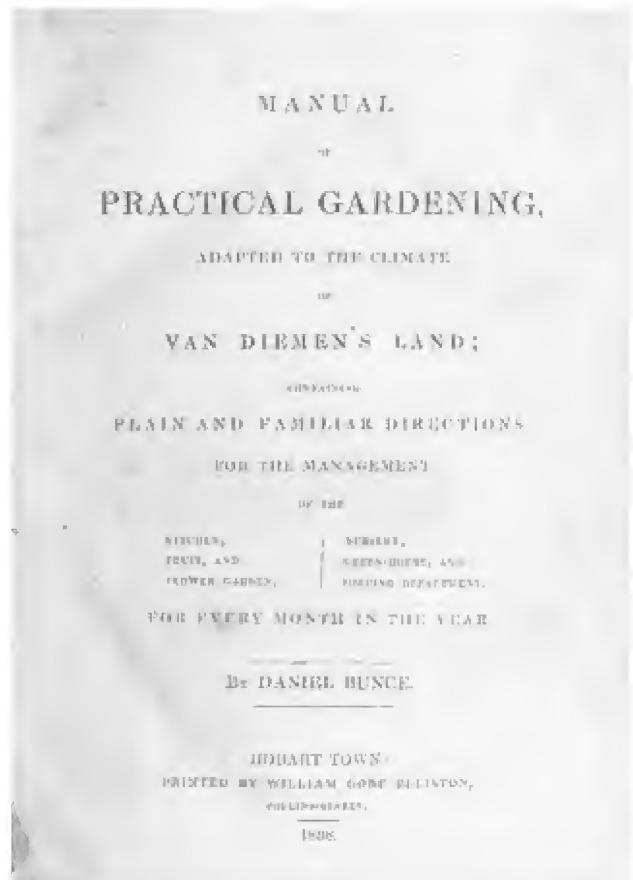
## THE RASPBERRY.

Invoice and Bill of Landing of a collection of grass seeds of various kinds for an experiment as to the probability of your effecting sales for your benefit and we hope they will they will be found to answer your expectations'. Clearly the Davis business was in its infancy, and it would not surprise if this was the first such invoice, retained as a keepsake of colonial endeavour. With clerical economy, Wrench adds at the end: 'We are obliged to our old friend Mr Willis for his recollection of us and to whom we beg to be kindly remembered

tulips had arrived. In the same edition Davis also announced he had tulips, crocus, and iris, and on the first of May he advertised an extensive range of vegetable seeds such as beans, cauliflower, and parsnips. Davis also soon numbered Daniel Bunce of Demark Hill Nursery amongst his competitors. Horticulture was important to the early settlers of Hobart Town—it provided food, memories of home, and could demonstrate social success.

I have had a personal interest in Daniel Bunce ever since I discovered that my family had a copy of his *Manual of Practical Gardening, adapted to the climate of Van Diemen's Land* (1838) in the bookshelves. Bunce appears to have taken over the nursery garden of Mr Lightfoot in February 1836. This was located on the New Town Road, a short distance from the centre of Hobart.

In August 1836 Bunce advertised in the *Courier* that he had a huge range of English forest and ornamental trees, such as English oak (*Quercus robur*), horse chestnuts (*Aesculus* spp.), and shrubs such as 'viburnum nudum' (*Viburnum nudum*) and 'spiraea corymbosa' (*Spiraea betulifolia* var. *corymbosa*), both east-coast North American shrubs. In the subsequent issues of the paper (19 August 1835), Davis retaliated by advertising a huge range of flower seeds including such favourites as zinnias and snapdragons, as well as unusual plants such as 'gilia capitata' (*Gilia achilleifolia*, a blue-flowering herbaceous



In 1838 Daniel Bunce published his *Manual of Practical Gardening, adapted to the climate of Van Diemen's Land*. It was initially released in twelve monthly installments (starting in July 1837) and was amongst the books offered for sale by his competitor, J.W. Davis at the family's warehouse.



The Davis family property at Yarram, in Victoria's Gippsland district, remained in family ownership for well over one hundred and fifty years. The newly built Edwardian residence in this snapshot had replaced the family's original weatherboard cottage although both residences enjoyed garden traditions that spanned across several generations.



Amongst the collections of the Davis and Pullman families were gardening books and seed and nursery catalogues that tell a story of gardening tastes belonging to distinctly different eras.

annual from California) and ‘Amobium alatum’ (*Ammobium alatum*, a perennial grassland/woodland plant of New South Wales). While Bunce specialised in plants and seeds, Davis appears to have largely confined the horticultural and agricultural side of his warehouse to seeds.

Business was difficult in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Bunce went into receivership in 1839, and while Davis continued trading, he was obviously experiencing difficulties. Waverly Park was re-let and Davis’s city business at one time appeared to be in the hands of another party. In May 1844 Davis finally sold off his stock prior to retiring from the business—‘The respectability of the connection and extensive trade of the establishment, for upwards of nine years, is too well known to need comment’ he advertised in the *Courier*.

James Davis decided to try his luck in Gippsland and arrived in April 1845. He continued his interest in plants, with Daniel Carmody of Hobart Town sending him ‘two bundles of raspberries, one of currants, with a little bundle of Grape plants and a box of Grape Cuttings’ (according to a letter still in family hands). Sophia died in 1850, and James Davis three years later, in the Victorian goldfields township Castlemaine.



The Davis family’s Gippsland property at Yarram remained in family hands until 2008 and has recently been sold. Dispersing family documents is always a difficult task, and in this case the most significant surviving items have all been carefully placed according to family interests. Whilst the earliest books and documents featured here take pride of place, the more recent records of later generations attest to continuing interest in horticulture, gardening, and garden-making. Long may they survive to tell their special story.

All illustrations in this article come from documents held in the Davis and Pullman family collection. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ettie Pullman and Richard Aitken in the preparation of this article.

**Sandra Pullman** is a horticulturist with a Bachelor of Applied Science (Horticulture) with Honours from Burnley College. She is currently teaching at TAFE and is a contributor to many gardening magazines. Her interest in the links between J.W. Davis and Daniel Bunce was initially sparked by Victor Crittenden’s facsimile publication of Daniel Bunce’s 1836 *Catalogue of Seeds and Plants, Indigenous and Exotic, cultivated and on sale at Denmark Hill Nursery, New Town Road, Hobart Town* (Mulini Press, ACT, 1994).

# *Flowers and fashion: the life and death of Frederick Searl*

## *Linda Emery*

Rarely do we obtain a glimpse of floristry's private world as intimate as that depicted in photographs recording the funeral in 1920 of Sydney nursery proprietor Frederick Searl.

For more than a century, the name Searl was synonymous with the floral and nursery trade in Sydney. Frederick Searl Senior began selling flowers, plants, and seeds in the 1850s from a store in the old city markets, which stood on the site of the Queen Victoria Building. Such was his success that his sons, Frederick and John, joined their father in the firm and the trio branched out into the nursery trade, growing their own flowers and plants at their Botany nursery. Searl and Sons was innovative in the way it developed and

promoted its business and became trendsetters in floral fashion. The firm imported plants and bulbs from all over the world, promoting new varieties of roses, carnations, and chrysanthemums.

Over time, the Searls established several specialised nurseries, including a Kentia palm nursery on Norfolk Island and, in 1905, a cold climate seed and bulb farm at Exeter in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. Walhallow, the rambling timber house they built at Exeter,



Frederick Searl leaves his home, Blair Athol, Strathfield, for the last time. The large funeral cortege of horse-drawn vehicles made its way slowly to Rookwood Necropolis for the burial service.

Courtesy John Hore, Bowral



Courtesy John Hore, Bowral

Floral tributes filled Frederick Searl's bedroom at Blair Athol, Strathfield, on the day of his funeral in December 1920.

became the family's summer holiday home. Arthur Yates, another well-known nurseryman, had already begun developing his own seed and bulb farm on the adjacent property. By the spring of 1906, Searl's daffodil farm had become something of a local attraction, with sightseers taking the train to Exeter to admire the 'host of golden daffodils' dancing in the fields. Hundreds of blooms were packed daily into large wicker baskets and sent to Sydney for the floristry trade. The Searls' flower shop in King Street was an institution, fondly remembered by Sydneysiders. The perfume from the shop would waft out onto the pavement and many a gentleman would pay the high price of the first gardenias of the season to impress his paramour.

*Amongst a collection of Searl family photographs are several pictures of Fred Searl's funeral, including a remarkable interior*

Frederick Henry Searl had been born in Parramatta in 1856 and began working with his father at a very early age. He spent the whole of his working life in the horticultural trade, a business he loved—and which loved him. As a plant enthusiast, Fred Searl was well known and universally respected. He was a deacon of the Baptist church at Petersham, which he decorated with flowers each Sunday and on every other special occasion. Blair Athol at Strathfield was the family home and it was here that he died in 1920. The author of a tribute to Fred Searl in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (entitled 'The Passing of a Gardener') wrote 'as a gardener, as a citizen, as a father and a friend, he was a man amongst men'. In an obituary in *The Australian Baptist*, Searl was described as 'quiet and unostentatious in all he did, his big heart overflowing in kindly sympathy and good deeds'.

It is perhaps not surprising to read that the floral tributes at his funeral from family, friends, and members of the floral trade were exceptionally beautiful. Rarely, however, do we see photographs



Courtesy John Hore, Bowral

The Searl family vault at Sydney's Rookwood Necropolis was bedecked with wreaths, flowers, and foliage by the staff of Searl and Sons—a fond farewell to their highly respected employer, Fred Searl.

of such tributes decorating a coffin in the very private and personal space of a bedroom. Amongst a collection of Searl family photographs are several pictures of Fred Searl's funeral, including a remarkable interior.

*staff of Searl and Sons lined his grave with flowers and foliage—both inside and out—‘as a last loving token, robbing the grave of its cold appearance’*

The photo of the bedroom at Blair Athol is of immense interest on several levels, from the very obvious reverence with which the room has been decorated to the varieties of flowers and plants used by the floral trade at the time, to the style of the wreaths and funeral practice in general.

A short service was held for Fred Searl in his home, before his coffin was taken by horse-drawn carriage to Rookwood Cemetery for burial. As

Mr Searl had often done for deceased friends and family members in the past, the staff of Searl and Sons lined his grave with flowers and foliage—both inside and out—‘as a last loving token, robbing the grave of its cold appearance’.

‘He was reared in a hard school, where work was constant and worth was taken into account’, wrote his obituarist, ‘But he always had time to catch and express the tenderness and the touch that is the soul of the sweet things of garden land.’

Gentle, gracious, and generous, Frederick Henry Searl made a significant contribution to the development of the horticultural trade in Australia. The precious photographs reproduced here keep this legacy alive.

**Linda Emery** has lived and worked in the Southern Highlands for more than 25 years. She is an active historian with a particular interest in colonial Australian history and is the author of several books relating to local subjects.

# *Weeds in Victorian landscapes: a Mount Eliza weed assembly*

*John Dwyer*

A comparison of three weed assemblages—from Renaissance Germany, seventeenth-century North America, and twenty-first century Melbourne—reveals many similarities in their composition, highlighting close parallels with the colonisation of people and plants in diverse parts of the globe.

By a cliff top path at Mount Eliza (Victoria), there may be found an assembly of more than twenty different exotic weeds growing in a small patch approximately one metre square. Many of these plants are common weeds of gardens and roadsides in Melbourne and its environs. The group, remarkable for the range of plant species represented in this small patch, includes

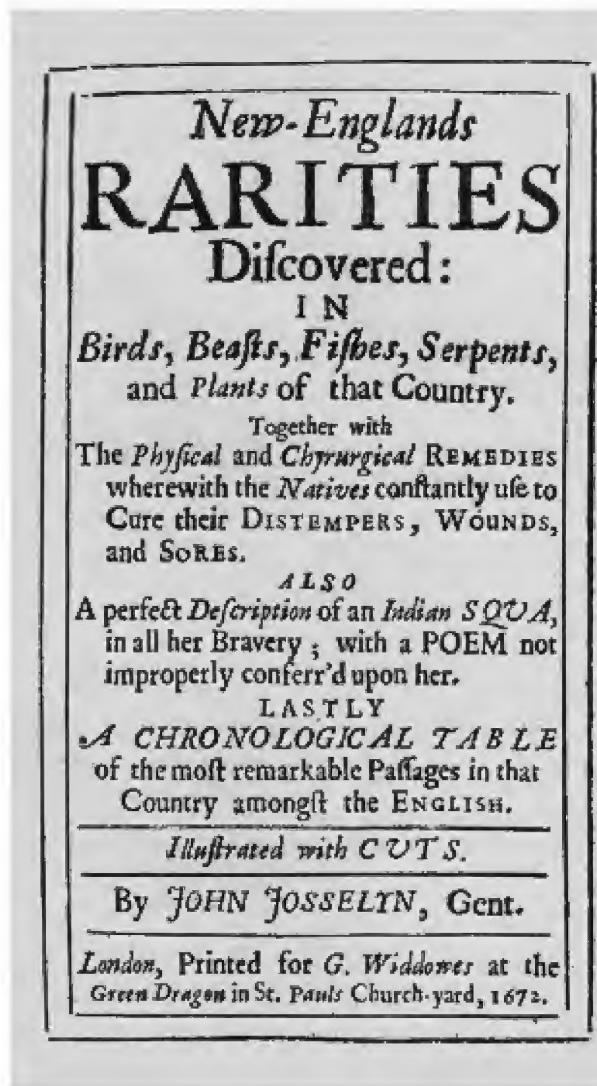
Blackberry, Capeweed, Chickweed, Clover, Couch, Cudweed, Dandelion, Dock, Fleabane, Knotgrass (or Wireweed), Mallow, Mirror Bush, Nightshade, Pimpernel, Plantain, Prairie Grass, Sedge, Sow Thistle, Tumbleweed, and Veldt Grass (see Table 1). Only one indigenous plant—identified as a Saltbush—was found among them.



Photo John Dwyer

As Table 1 shows, many of the weeds were early introductions to Victoria. More than half were recorded in Ferdinand Mueller's *First General Report of the Government Botanist* (1853) and by Samuel Hannaford in his *Jottings in Australia or Notes on the Flora and Fauna of Victoria* (1856). Although there are some plants from South Africa (Veldt Grass and Capeweed), from the Americas (Prairie Grass), and from New Zealand (Mirror Bush), most were European weeds introduced as part of the British settlement of Victoria.

In terms of the introduction of European weeds as part of colonisation, it is interesting to make two comparisons. The seventeenth-century colonisation of New England was also accompanied by weeds which were a component of English agriculture. An early listing of them was provided in John Josselyn's *New-Englands Rarities Discovered* (1672), which included a list 'Of such plants as have sprung up since the English Planted and kept cattle in New-England'. John Josselyn, an Essex man, has been described as a 'scion of impoverished gentry'. He was a



John Dwyer collection

**Table 1: Mount Eliza weed assembly (2008)**

Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* L.): recorded as naturalised 1887

Capeweed (*Arctotheca calendula* (L.) Levyns.): Recorded in Mueller's *First General Report* (1853)

Clustered Dock (*Rumex conglomeratus* Murray): naturalised 1870

Couch (*Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers.): naturalised after 1909

Cudweed (*Gamochaeta purpurea* (L.) Cabrera; syn *Gnaphalium purpureum* L.): the related Jersey Cudweed (*Gnaphalium luteo-album* L.) was recorded by Hanaford in 1856

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* Weber): recorded by Mueller 1853

Flaxleaf Fleabane (*Conyza bonariensis* (L.) Cronq.): Mueller 1853

Knotgrass or Wireweed (*Polygonum aviculare* L.): Mueller 1853

Mirror Bush (*Coprosma repens* A. Rich.): naturalised after 1909

Mouse-ear Chickweed (*Cerastium glomeratum* Thuill.): Mueller 1853

Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum* L.): naturalised by 1910

Panic Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta erecta* Lam.): recorded as naturalised 1925

Pimpenel (*Anagallis arvensis* L.): Mueller 1853

Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata* L.): Mueller 1853

Prairie Grass (*Bromus catharticus* Vahl.): recorded as naturalised 1908

Small-flowered Mallow (*Malva parviflora* L.): recorded as naturalised 1863

Sow Thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus* L.): Mueller 1853

Tumbleweed (*Amaranthus albus* L.): recorded as naturalised 1888

Umbrella sedge (*Cyperus eragrostis* Lam.): recorded as naturalised 1860

Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta longiflora* J.E. Smith ): recorded as naturalised 1878

White Clover (*Trifolium repens* L.): Mueller 1853

Table 2: Josselyn's New England list (1672) with synonyms and botanical names

Josselyn's name	Synonyms	Botanical names
Couch Grass	Quack Grass, Quitch, Wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron repens</i> (L.) Beauv.
Shepherds Purse		<i>Capsella bursapastoris</i> (L.) Medik.
<b>Dandelion</b>		<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> Weber; syn <i>T. dens-leonis</i> Desf.
Groundsel	Common Groundsell	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i> L.
<b>Sow Thistle</b>		<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i> L.
Wild Arrach	Wild Orach or All-seed	<i>Atriplex patula</i> L.
<b>Night Shade</b>	Black Nightshade	<i>Solanum nigrum</i> L.
Nettlesstinging	Dwarf Nettle	<i>Urtica urens</i> L.
<b>Mallowes</b>		<i>Malva</i> spp.
<b>Plantain</b>	Greater Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i> L.
Black Henbane		<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> L.
Wormwood		<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L.
<b>Sharp pointed Dock</b>	Sorrel Dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i> L. or <i>R. conglomeratus</i> Murray
Patience		<i>Rumex patientia</i> L.
Bloodwort	Wood Dock	<i>Rumex sanguineus</i> L.
Adders Tongue	Adderstongue	<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i> L.
<b>Knot Grass</b>	Knotweed	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> L.
<b>Cheek weed</b>	Chick Weed	<i>Cerastium glomeratum</i> Thuill.
Compherie	Common Comfrey	<i>Sympytum officinale</i> L.
May weed	Stinking Mayweed, Stinking Chamomile	<i>Anthemis cotula</i> L.
Clot Bur	Burdock	<i>Arctium lappa</i> L.
Mullin	White Mullein	<i>Verbascum lynchii</i> L.

son of Thomas Josselyn, who had been knighted by James I in 1603. John Josselyn was in New England for two periods during the seventeenth century; for about 15 months in 1638–39, and then for some eight years from 1663 to 1671.

Although some modern writers have ridiculed Josselyn for his inclusion in *New-Englands Rarities* of exaggerated accounts of phenomena, the work was taken seriously enough at the time of publication for London's Royal Society to include a two-page summary in its *Philosophical Transactions* (1672). The book fell squarely enough within the full title: 'Philosophical Transactions giving some account of the present undertakings, studies, and labours of the ingenious, in many considerable parts of the world'. Since the issues for 1672 were largely taken up with the exposition and discussion of Newton's theory of light, Josselyn was in distinguished company.

Josselyn's 1672 list (using italics as he did) was as follows:

*Couch Grass, Shepherds Purse, Dandelion, Groundsel, Sow Thistle, Wild Arrach, Night Shade, with the white Flower, Nettlesstinging,* which was the first Plant taken notice of, *Mallowes, Plantain*, which the Indians call English Man's Foot, as though produced by their treading, *Black Henbane, Wormwood, Sharp pointed Dock, Patience, Bloodwort, And I suspect Adders Tongue, Knot Grass, Cheek Weed, Compherie*, with the white Flower, *May weed*, excellent for the Mother; some of our English Housewives call it *Iron Wort*, and make a good Unguent for old sores, The great *Clot Bur, Mullin*, with the white Flower.

Many, but not all, of these plants have the same common names today. Any uncertainty may be removed by a careful consideration of

contemporary sources. In order to pin down what plants Josselyn was referring to, three contemporaneous sources are available: Philemon Holland's edition of *Pliny's Natural History* (1601), Johnson's edition of *Gerard's Herbal* (1633), and Culpeper's *The Complete Herbal* (1653). There are often variations in the spelling of plant names in these works while Josselyn sometimes adds his own version. Such variations seldom affect our understanding of the substance.

Josselyn's references to Pliny and to Johnson suggest that he knew these works well. Although he does not refer by name to Culpeper, Josselyn may well have been familiar with his theories. The delphic paragraph in *New-Englands Rarities* immediately following Josselyn's list appears to have been intended as a rebuttal of Culpeper's astrological botany: 'What became of the influence of those Planets that produce and govern these Planets [sic] before this time?' Josselyn's argument seems to be that the introduction of exotic species to New England casts doubt on any supposed influence of the planets on the plants; for what were the planets doing before the plants were introduced?

Josselyn's list with alternative common names and botanical names added is included here as Table 2. Most, if not all, have become naturalised weeds in Victoria. Nearly half are in the Mount Eliza assembly. The nine plants in Josselyn's list to be found at Mount Eliza have been bolded. Although Couch was included in Josselyn's list, the plant referred to was probably not the Couch at Mount Eliza (*Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers.) but English Couch (*Agropyron repens* (L.) Beauv. syn. *Elytrigia repens* (L.) Nevski.). We know from Josselyn's sequel *Two Voyages to New England* (1674) that the Plantain was 'broad-leaved Plantain'—the modern name is Greater Plantain (*Plantago major* L.). The plants common to the two lists demonstrate that the colonisation in Victoria in the nineteenth century included the introduction of weeds which had earlier been introduced to New England (in the seventeenth century) as part of the colonisation process. The plants were well known weeds in Europe. The presence of some in Germany in 1503 is supported by D rer's forensic depiction (see page 22).

The second comparison to Mount Eliza is with a European weed assembly from the sixteenth century depicted in Albrecht D rer's 'Das große Rasenstück' [The Large Piece of Turf], 1503. D rer's masterful water colour, which

hangs in the Albertina in Vienna, is celebrated because it demonstrates the determination of this Renaissance artist to engage with nature and by the most careful observation to capture the reality of his subject. As D rer wrote, in a passage quoted in Anna Pavord's *The Naming of Names* (2005):

*Life in nature manifests the truth. Therefore observe it diligently, go by it and do not depart from nature arbitrarily, imagining to find the better by thyself, for thou wouldest be misled. For verily, art is embedded in nature; he who can extract it has it.*

The work, painted while D rer was living in Nuremberg, is an assembly of nine common plants to be found growing wild throughout Europe: Pavord names them as 'smooth meadow grass, speedwell, dandelion, hounds tongue, cocksfoot, daisy, greater plantain, creeping bent and yarrow'. Nuremberg was something of a garden city in D rer's time. The following description, written by a townsman in 1495, was also quoted by Pavord:

*About the windows of its houses, where reigns undying spring, innumerable flowers and foreign plants fill the air with their sweet scents, which the lightest breeze carries into the bedrooms and innermost chambers.*

The nine plants D rer selected to make his nature study—to bring out the art 'embedded in nature'—would almost certainly have been regarded as weeds if they grew among the cultivated 'foreign plants' in the gardens of Nuremberg. Yet the beauty of the plants is undeniable. Perhaps it was the desire to make us appreciate their beauty that inspired D rer's painting, an oft-reproduced masterpiece.

Visually, my photograph of the Mount Eliza weed assembly has much in common with D rer's painting. His perspective is close to a worm's-eye view; whereas the photograph is taken from a higher angle. There are many more species at Mount Eliza: the photograph is more crowded than the painting. Dandelion is the most prominent plant in both. Plantain is in both, although D rer depicted Greater Plantain (*Plantago major* L.), whereas the Plantain at Mount Eliza was *Plantago lanceolata* L. Instead of the European grasses in D rer's assembly, the grasses at Mount Eliza were from the New World: Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta longiflora* J.E. Smith), Panic Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta erecta* Lam.), and Prairie Grass (*Bromus catharticus* Vahl.). The effect overall, however, is similar.



Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), ‘Das große Rasenstück’ [The Large Piece of Turf], 1503

**Table 3: Plants depicted by D rer (1503) now naturalised in Victoria**

Smooth Meadow Grass ( <i>Poa pratensis</i> L.): naturalised in Victoria since at least the 1880s; the widespread <i>Poa annua</i> L. was naturalised by 1853
Speedwell ( <i>Veronica officinalis</i> L.): does not appear in lists of plants naturalised in Victoria, but other species are naturalised, including <i>V. peregrina</i> L., which Mueller listed as naturalised in 1853
Dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> Weber): listed by Mueller as naturalised by 1853
Hound's Tongue ( <i>Cynoglossum officinale</i> L.): does not appear to have naturalised in Victoria, although Willis lists three indigenous species of <i>Cynoglossum</i>
Cocksfoot ( <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> L.): naturalised by 1853
Daisy ( <i>Bellis perennis</i> L.): naturalised by 1902 and now ubiquitous
Greater Plantain ( <i>Plantago major</i> L.): naturalised later than Ribwort Plantain ( <i>P. lanceolata</i> L.) and Buckshorn Plantain ( <i>P. coronopus</i> L.) which Mueller listed in 1853; <i>P. major</i> Cam. was added by Mueller in 1888 in his <i>Key to the System of Victorian Plants</i> ; Ribwort Plantain is the species most frequently encountered in Victoria today
Creeping Bent ( <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> L.): naturalised by 1908; later than the related <i>A. palustris</i> Hudson (Fiorin Grass) which Mueller listed in 1888
Yarrow ( <i>Achillea millefolium</i> L.): naturalised by 1887

These weed species were part of the ecological invasion which accompanied European colonisation of Australia.

Just as we have books in our libraries which contain reproductions of D rer's famous plant study, so we have in our gardens, our roadsides, and the uncultivated turf of Victoria, the plants themselves or their closely related species. As Table 3 shows, most of D rer's plants have become naturalised weeds in Victoria. Books containing images of D rer's works have been imported intentionally. What of the plants he depicted? Their introduction is more complicated.

Some were introduced deliberately. We know from William Kelly's *Life in Victoria* (1853), for example, that Dandelion was under cultivation in Melbourne in the 1850s. Others probably came by accident. In one sense, some of these plants which flourish at Mount Eliza today are as much part of our inherited culture as the European paintings included in our pantheon of art.

Our cultural association with many of the weeds found in this patch at Mount Eliza is centuries old. Such long associations are not easily broken. We should accept that these weeds, like many of the exotic weeds of Victoria, will never be eradicated. We must learn to live with them, accepting that all we can ever hope to do is to be able to manage them appropriately.

#### Notes on sources

For Josselyn see Karl J. Holtgen, 'Francis Quarles, John Josselyn, and the Bay Psalm Book', *Seventeenth-Century News*, 34 (1976), pp.42–46, and Paul Lindholdt, *John Josselyn Colonial Traveller*, University Press of New England, Hanover, 1988. The quote is from John Josselyn, *New-Englands Rarities Discovered: in birds, beasts, fishes, serpents, and plants of that country*, London, 1672, (facsimile editions: W. Junk, Berlin, 1926; Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, 1972), pp.85–86. Major references used for the Victorian flora include F. Mueller, *Key to the System of Victorian Plants*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1888; A. Ewart & J. Tovey, *The Weeds, Poison Plants, and Naturalized Aliens of Victoria*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1909; J.H. Willis, *A Handbook to Plants in Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 1962–72; and N. Walsh & T. Entwistle (eds), *Flora of Victoria*, Vols 2–4, Inkata Press, Melbourne, 1994–99. I am grateful to John Delprat of Burnley College who helped to confirm the identity of some of the weeds from Mount Eliza.

**Dr John Dwyer QC**, retiring after some 36 years of practise at the Victorian Bar, took up the study of horticulture at Burnley. His doctoral thesis 'Weeds in Victorian landscapes' was submitted to The University of Melbourne in 2007. He is currently Vice-Chair of the Australian Garden History Society.

# *Conserving the University of Adelaide's embankment garden*

*Louise Bird*

The embankment garden at the University of Adelaide, established in 1929 by landscape designer Elsie Cornish (1870–1946), has recently been the subject of research leading to proposals for its conservation.

The embankment garden at the University of Adelaide was not only a notable feature of the University's landscape but also that of Adelaide's during the inter-war and post-war periods. Approximately 300 metres long, the embankment garden was designed, constructed, and maintained by locally prominent landscape designer Elsie Cornish, in an escarpment formed from nineteenth century quarrying. Running from the caretaker's cottage on Kintore Avenue to a point behind the Elder Conservatorium in a roughly dog-legged shape, the escarpment divided the upper and lower university grounds.

Beginning work on the garden in 1929, Cornish managed the scale of the site by dividing its construction into three sections, each taking two years to complete. Her planting scheme, based on succulents, cacti, Australian plant species, and northern Italian hillside species, was an astute choice for the difficult, hot, north-facing site composed of limestone rubble; without access to supplementary water the garden also needed to survive on rainfall. The extensive use of massed cacti and succulents in a public garden was unusual in Adelaide for the period and probably gained acceptance through the support of Walter



A section of the embankment garden between the Barr Smith Library and the main staircase, looking towards the Union Building, c.1935.

Source: The Advertiser Pictorial Library

Bagot, the University's architect, and Eva and Lily Waite of the prominent Waite family, who were significant University of Adelaide benefactors. Many of the succulents and cacti were propagated in Cornish's small nursery at her residence in North Adelaide. The blaze of colour created particularly by the pigface (*Carpobrotus edulis* and *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum*) during summer received significant coverage in the local newspapers.

Cornish continued to manage the embankment garden until her death in 1946. While remaining a feature of the university grounds for decades the garden has been successively eroded due to the extension of existing buildings and the construction of many new buildings on top of the escarpment, a process begun in the 1960s. By the 1990s only two remnant sections remained: one section by the Observatory, and the other between the main brick staircase, which links the upper and lower grounds, and the Union building. A third portion of the garden, adjacent to the Barr Smith Library that had not been built upon, was replanted with Australian plants during the 1980s. Around 2003 a small portion of the Observatory remnant was replanted with a selection of succulents.

In 2006, Associate Professor Jones of the University's School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design, was commissioned by the University of Adelaide to undertake an historical landscape assessment of the embankment garden. In the subsequent report he concluded that the embankment garden is and has been 'an important element in the physical and cultural evolution of the University'. Particularly relevant was Cornish's planting philosophy which provides a model for current drought tolerant and low water usage gardens. Jones recommended that existing remnants including the section replanted with natives be 'renovated ... to bring back its original character and plant palette to celebrate the role and contribution of Cornish to the University and city, and also to demonstrate [the University's] philosophical commitment to sustainability by using the garden as a



Source: The Advertiser Pictorial Library

A portion of the mid-section of the embankment garden adjacent to the Union Building, c.1935.

demonstration Mediterranean landscape garden while at the same time recognising its heritage merit'. To date the University of Adelaide has not made an official decision about renovating these remnants. However, recent remodelling of the area adjacent to the Barr Smith Library entrance by architectural firm Swanbury Penglase, will see this section of the garden replanted; the planting scheme proposed in the re-design draws heavily from the list of succulents and cacti recommended by the historical landscape assessment.

#### Notes on sources

Historical material for this article is drawn from the author's Master of Landscape Architecture thesis 'The Interwar Gardens of Elsie Marion Cornish: a comparative and contextual analysis', University of Adelaide, 2006, pp.110–21. Details of the heritage assessment (including the various quotations) are from David Jones, 'University of Adelaide (North Terrace Campus) Embankment Historical Landscape Assessment', unpublished report, University of Adelaide, 2006, pp.9, 14, supplemented by recent discussions (October 2008) with the report's author.

**Louise Bird** is a landscape and architectural historian who is currently working at the University of South Australia on an inter-disciplinary research project on the design history of twentieth century South Australian children's playgrounds.

# Bowral Conference report: October 2009

## Caroline Grant

### Pre-conference tour

My flight across Australia from Perth to Sydney was remarkable—the landscape was well lit, and the transition over the Darling Scarp, forest, wheat belt, pastoral regions, and the brilliant turquoise contrast of the Great Australian Bight was comprehended in minutes. Soon in a dark, wet Sydney, I wondered about the weather for our pre-conference tour, knowing that for many parts of Australia rain would be a welcome visitor. It seemed that the blanket of green we saw throughout the tour due to recent rains disguised the effects of sustained drought.

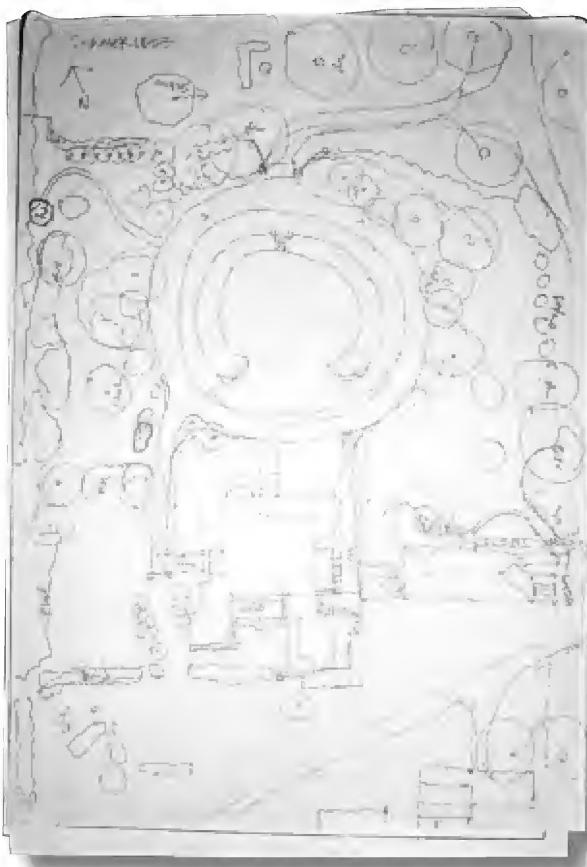
From our guided tour of the ‘Lost Gardens of Sydney’ exhibition with curator **Colleen Morris** we drove out of Sydney to Charles Throsby’s **Glenfield** near Campbelltown (1817). The garden design philosophy has been to marry the old with the recent past. Like Glenfield, **Glenlee** (1823) has layered evidence of garden elements from different periods but unlike Glenfield its landscape setting is still rural (although subject to intense development pressures). Other colonial properties visited—**Golden Vale** at Sutton Forest (1842), **Spring Ponds** at Bungonia near Goulburn (land grant 1823), **Wollogorang** (1860), and **Longfield** (1841)—combined early tree plantings, especially conifers, with often deeply personal plantings and design elements by more recent owners. Apart from a few ancient *Pinus radiata*, the **Pejar Park** garden was almost entirely the creation of Bea Bligh (from 1948). Bligh was heavily influenced by the highly publicised Edna Walling, and by Winifred West, founder of Frensham School in Mittagong (on whose influence **Holly Kerr Forsyth** spoke at the conference). In turn Bligh influenced the gardening public with her own ideas, especially through her gardening books.

Until recently, the approach to **Hillasmount** (land grant 1820s, house 1876) was from the south through Taralga via ‘Swallowtail Pass’. Having just climbed by coach up a winding road from Taralga through forested areas, and walking from the front gate of the property up the hill, we had some appreciation of the difficulty the early European settlers faced in establishing such properties. **The Cottage** was built as the manager’s house on Bannaby Station, part of the Hillas family holding. **Richlands** was established as an outstation of

Camden Park by John and Elizabeth Macarthur. At its peak it comprised of 38,000 acres (15,000 hectares) of grazing land and crops. By 1890 Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow had upgraded Richlands as a second residence for her family. Many tour participants were knowledgeable about the properties featured in the ‘Lost Gardens’ exhibition and the ability to share in this knowledge made our pre-conference garden visits all the richer, and in many we appreciated further promise of archaeological potential to aid an understanding of the surviving plantings and layouts.

### ‘From Wilderness to Pleasure Ground’

With this promising title, the conference made me consider anew the terms ‘wilderness’ and ‘Southern Highlands’. Academic and consultant planner Ian Bowie defined the Southern Highlands as extending generally from south



Conference and tour participant Craig Burton produced a remarkable record of garden visits with this atmospheric sketch book of plans.



The scale and character of the rural property Wingecarribee (1828), located immediately adjacent to Bowral, now forms a rare cultural landscape on this rapidly developing urban fringe.

of Sydney to the Victorian border but more specifically as the area roughly corresponding to the Wingecarribee Shire. Parts closer to Sydney and transport routes are experiencing a great deal of development pressure while approximately half of the shire comprises national parks. With a variable rainfall, areas of water catchments are often steep land unsuited to development—in a sense it self-selects as wilderness. Having long admired Paul Shepheard's book *The Cultivated Wilderness* (1997), Richard Aitken's keynote address led us all through changes in the perception of wilderness, from the eighteenth century when it expanded from a garden element composed of rough and contrasting trees and shrubbery to became associated with sublimity and awe in natural scenery, through to the nineteenth century when it stopped being a frightening place and 'excited pleasurable sensations'. In one sense our national parks have replaced private wildernesses. At a local level, work continues at **Mount Gibraltar** to eradicate garden escapes to recapture the indigenous landscape.

Garden visits to **Retford Park, Wingecarribee, Summerlees, and Milton Park** reminded us of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century pleasure grounds for which the Southern Highlands became famed, while more recent gardens such as **Moidart, Kennerton Green, Prittlewell, Yarrawa, and Two Gates** told of the continuing passion for gardening and garden-making in this region. The interwar years were covered by three of the conference speakers. **Jim Hoskins** spoke of his family's passion for gardening and of the gardens which his industrialist forebears created from wealth generated by family-controlled iron and steel making concerns. In 1936 the Danish-trained garden designer Paul Sorensen worked for the Hoskins family, and **Stuart Read** outlined this connection and other projects of this designer. **Linda Emery's** presentation on garden nurseries revealed just how significant the area was for the

raising of plants throughout Australia, with names such as Yates, Shepherd, Jensen, and Searl (see story page 15).

### Illawarra day tour

A long windy drive up **Mount Keira** led to a wonderful lookout over the Illawarra coast where we glimpsed the Hoskins' home **Gleniffer Brae** (now part of the University of Wollongong). Beyond lay the industrial area of Port Kembla. Mount Keira Scout Camp was also once owned by the Hoskins family and generations of BHP workers and scouting families assisted with its construction. Paul Sorensen left his mark at the chapel with its dry stone walls and steps. In this vicinity the vegetation is rich in species as it includes both sandstone and rainforest ecosystems. Sorensen ensured many rainforest trees were retained on the site, including Illawarra flame trees (*Brachychiton acerifolius*) and Australian red cedar (*Toona ciliata*). Proceeding south to the Shoalhaven area, we visited **Coolangatta** (1822), one of the earliest outlying European settlements on the south coast. Beyond Coolangatta lay **Terrara** (1836) with its 1880s house approached through substantial heritage-listed oaks and elms.

All of the properties we visited showed us wonderful hospitality. I came away with an insight into a community of people and places which have had a large bearing on my life even though I have spent most of my life on the opposite side of Australia. Thanks to **Chris Webb** and the very hard-working conference committee (drawn from members of the Australian Garden History Society's **Southern Highlands Branch**) which he chaired for making this conference such an enjoyable and enriching experience.

**Caroline Grant** is a landscape architect specialising in the conservation of historic landscapes and gardens.

# *National Management Committee profile: Sue Monger*

Sue Monger's involvement with the West Australian Branch began with membership in 1998, which coincided with her participation in the AGHS Annual National Conference hosted by the WA Branch that year.

## *Could you describe the beginnings of your ongoing relationship with gardens and garden history?*

I grew up on a cattle property near Sale in Victoria's Gippsland region. Mine is the fourth generation fortunate enough to live in the homestead, surrounded by an extensive garden my mother developed within an inherited framework of mature trees—a wonderful playground for energetic and noisy children. My mother's speciality was cultivating unusual and difficult-to-grow plants, and on this she often corresponded with Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. My enjoyment of gardens and gardening springs from this. Later, the water repellent limestone coastal sands of Perth became a very good teacher of the *plants for soils and environments* practice!

The WA branch was established 20 years ago, and for many years was chaired by John Viska. I became Chair in February 2006 and, with an enthusiastic committee, have been involved in continuing to provide members with a creative and stimulating range of activities.

## *The events and activities developed and initiated by the WA Branch are wide-ranging and quite diverse. Could you summarise just a few?*

In a bid to foster cross pollination between like-minded bodies we joined University of Western Australia 'Friends of the Grounds' for their walk and talk at St George's College. Likewise we recently shared a visit to Roleystone in the Perth hills with Heritage Roses in Australia.

One of the more unusual activities was a partnership with the City of Subiaco. A temporary exhibition, 'Subiaco's Municipal Gardens: People and Change', introduced visitors to some of the people who designed and developed the City's gardens, showed how Rankin Gardens have grown into their present form—described the changes in horticultural practices in the gardens over the years—and explained how the City currently

manages its parks and gardens in a sustainable way. AGHS Members assisted museum curator Elizabeth Hof with research and also lent items for display. The ten-week exhibition and associated guided walks, part of a widely advertised public programme run by the City, was helpful in raising the profile of the Society.

## *And what about the publication that evolved from an idea for a local pamphlet into a guide with national application?*

Perhaps our most ambitious venture! It evolved as a result of members of the public requesting information on restoring historic gardens. John Viska developed a list of references and sources (such as nursery catalogues) and set about compiling a pamphlet. With financial support from Lotterywest through its Cultural Heritage Interpretation Grant programme the colourful and useful *Guide to Conserving and Interpreting Gardens in Western Australia* was published. It was launched in 2007 by Dr Jenny Gregory, Associate Professor of History at UWA. The 'Guide' has been made available to Local Studies librarians in Western Australia and to municipal councils with the suggestion it be considered in town planning and heritage area decision-making.



# For the bookshelf

Lynne Chapman, Noelene Drage, Di Durston, Jenny Jones, Hillary Merrifield, & Billy West, *Tea Roses: old roses for warm climates*, Rosenberg Publishing, Dural, NSW, 2008 (ISBN 9781877058677): hardback RRP \$59.95

Of all the numerous rose books that are published every year it is a pleasure to be able to rate a local publication well ahead of all the rest. Such a claim needs amplification and it is easy to provide; most rose books are elaborated lists of cultivars supplemented with colour photographs, brief cultivation notes, and in the better books, some discussion and evaluation of the comparative merits of each rose. Nearly all books have high production standards including this one.

What separates the good from the so-so and dull is the quality of the writing and the research that has gone into enabling an informative and entertaining discourse between the authors and their readers. This is where *Tea Roses* is outstanding. Throughout the text there is ample wide-ranging discussion generated from communication between the authors and other old rose enthusiasts; it is reported not as heritage rose dogma but as a thoughtful evaluation of sometimes conflicting opinion and expertise. And it is done with wit, style, charm, and acceptance that where old roses are concerned their very age endows them with diversity and riches, as well as a degree of confused historic transmission of names and descriptions.

Well done authors; a delightful and beautiful book.

**Trevor Nottle**

John Dargavel, *The Zealous Conservator: a life of Charles Lane Poole*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, WA, 2008: (ISBN 978 1 921401 14 5): paperback RRP \$29.95

The genesis of this book lies in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*. The author, Dr John Dargavel, was asked by the editors to write an entry on Charles Lane Poole. While originally sceptical he found Charles and his charming wife Ruth to be great subjects for a biography.

Charles Lane Poole (1885–1970) was a quite extraordinary man, though in many respects extremely difficult to like. His training and legacy still resonates through Australian forestry. His forbearing wife, left alone with their children for years at a time, was equally interesting and

probably more likeable. She was the cousin of W.B Yeats, an artist herself, and designer of considerable distinction within the Arts and Crafts movement who worked with Harold Desbrowe-Annear in Australia. Her most public legacies are the furnishings of the Prime Minister's Lodge, Government House (Yarralumla), and the old Forestry School.

Charles Lane Poole trained in the French Forestry School at Nancy and in many ways was a Tory martinet. But he was an extremely tough man who despite having lost a hand through a shooting accident at a young age would undertake some of the hardest forest exploration of the early twentieth century. He worked in the Transvaal, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, other Pacific Islands, and in Australia. His story is like a boys' own adventure driven by an almost desperate care to 'conserve the forests'. Crossing the Kokoda Track in the 1920s and what seemed to be a lifelong ability to fight with bureaucrats and politicians were his tough side. But creating a professional forestry school, collecting many new species (44 type specimens alone in the Queensland Herbarium), and in establishing herbaria, nurseries, and arboreta everywhere he went was his cultural legacy. He found few Australians at the time other than Russell Grimwade in Victoria who appreciated his work.

This is an adventurous and well written biography of an important plant enthusiast—indeed a 'ripping yarn'. As John Dargavel said of Charles Lane Poole, he was 'a man who commanded attention'.

**Max Bourke**

Robert Freestone & Bronwyn Hanna, *Florence Taylor's Hats: designing, building and editing Sydney*, Halstead Press, Ultimo, NSW, 2008 (ISBN 9781920831363): paperback RRP \$29.95

Florence Taylor (1879–1969) was a professional woman well ahead of her time. With Sydney as the locus of her activities, but reaching a national and on occasions international audience through the numerous journals that she owned and edited, Taylor witnessed a period of massive social, technological, and cultural change in Australia. The publication for which she and her husband George are best remembered is *Building*, which was one of Australia's pre-eminent design journals from its commencement in 1907 to its demise in the early 1970s. She was a keen advocate for town planning, including adequate space for parks and gardens; she

## For the bookshelf (CONTINUED)



stroved to raise professional recognition for women in various fields of design and construction; and over a long period she championed the cause of the arts in Australia.

This full-length biography and commentary on Florence Taylor takes its title metaphorically after her polymathic interests and literally from her fondness for hats. Taylor was a great self-promoter and the authors have had an abundance of documents, recollections, and autobiographical snippets that laced Florence's journalism on which to draw. Florence Taylor's life story is set within a context that has wider relevance than just this one industry figurehead, and those interested in Australia's twentieth-century design history will find much of interest in this closely observed book.

**Richard Aitken**

*Building* magazine, commenced by Florence and George Taylor in 1907, was one of the main journalistic vehicles for Florence's enthusiastic promotion and strident criticism (which she dispensed in equal measure).

## Recently released

Bill Kent, Ros Pesman, & Cynthia Troup (eds), *Australians in Italy: contemporary lives and impressions*, Monash University ePress, Melbourne, 2008 (ISBN 978 0 9803616 8 1): paperback RRP \$37.95; (ISBN 978 0 9803616 9 8) online RRP \$29.95 via [www.epress.monash.edu](http://www.epress.monash.edu)

A collection of long and short essays, *Australians in Italy* explores long-held ties between Italy and Australia. It adopts the perspective of Australians' love affair with Italy, and their scholarly and cultural engagement with the place, rather than the more familiar—though no less rich—experience of Italians and Italo-Australians in Australia. The online edition includes stunning colour photographs and links to associated websites. One essay worthy of attention is Jane Drakard's 'Elusive Landscapes: Australians and "The Italian Garden"' where her engaging analysis of Italian gardens and the responses of others' to them—including Edna Walling, Germaine Greer, and Jeffrey Smart—is accompanied by sumptuous photographs of historic and dry climate Mediterranean gardens.

Maggie MacKellar, *Strangers in a Foreign Land: the journal of Niel Black and other voices from the Western District*, The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Vic., 2008 (ISBN 978 0 522 85512 8): hardback RRP: \$26.99

Niel Black's journal formed a rich source for Margaret Kiddle's social history of Victoria's Western District—*Men of Yesterday* (1961)—and now the original manuscript journal has been separately published with commentary. Black arrived from Scotland in 1839 and after a sojourn in Sydney spent his life creating a pastoral dynasty in the rich country around Lake Terang and Mount Noorat. With the Western District a focus for the 2009 AGHS Geelong conference this is recommended reading.

Hamish Foote, *Faces of Nature in the World: a series of paintings of New Zealand's early resident natural history enthusiasts*, Artis Gallery, Auckland, NZ, 2008 (ISBN 978 0 473 13071 8): stapled paperback RRP NZ\$12.50

Published as a catalogue to an intriguing series of portraits, this work includes substantial

contextual essays by art historian David Waddington and garden historian John Adam. Foote's paintings owe a debt to Renaissance portraiture, yet as the essayists explore, he uses this trope to examine nineteenth-century attitudes to the colonial environment.

**Scott Millwood, *What ever happened to Brenda Hean?*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2008 (ISBN 978 1 7417 5611 1): paperback RRP \$26.95**

Environmental activist and member of the Hobart establishment, Brenda Hean disappeared in 1972 after taking off in a Tiger Moth with Max Price bound for Canberra to write 'Save Lake Pedder' across the sky. Millwood is a documentary film-maker whose film of the same title is due for Australian release in 2008–09. Both book and film draw on eye-witness accounts and new evidence provided to the film-maker/author by an anonymous source, exploring an event which has confounded conspiracy theorists for decades.

**Christine & Michael Morton-Evans, *The Flower Hunter: the remarkable life of Ellis Rowan*, Simon & Schuster Australia, Pymble, NSW, 2008 (ISBN 978 0 7318128 5 1): paperback RRP \$34.95**

This new biography draws heavily on existing scholarship yet presents Rowan's life in an uncomplicated narrative providing a useful introduction for devotees and newcomers alike.

**Kevin Williams, *Seed to Elegance: Kentia palms of Norfolk Island, South Pacific*, Studio Monarch, Norfolk Island, 2007 (ISBN 978 0 9775121 1 9): paperback RRP \$24.95 plus \$5.50 postage from [www.studiomonarchbooks.com](http://www.studiomonarchbooks.com)**

This slender volume charts the horticultural history of the Kentia palm, the story of the people involved, and historic links forged between Norfolk Island, Europe, and North America. Identified by Charles Moore in 1869 on Lord Howe Island, this arborescent monocot became a highly sought and expensive accoutrement for fashionable Victorian interiors. The trend was set from seed exported to Europe and North America from Lord Howe Island from the turn of the twentieth century. In the inter-war years, plantations were established on Norfolk Island and the industry continues to thrive there. The final two-thirds of the book concentrate on practical information about growth and industry procedures. The Kentia Palm in Australian garden and horticultural history is not the focus of this book, although the role of Charles Moore, through correspondence with Sir Joseph Hooker (curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) and publications

in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, in sowing the seeds of an industry are discussed. (For one connection to Australian horticultural history see Linda Emery's article on Frederick Searl earlier in this issue.)

**Jennifer Munroe, *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature*, Ashgate, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2008 (ISBN 978 0 7546 5826 9): hardback RRP £45.00**

Drawing on contemporary visual and literary sources held in the British Library and from surviving garden remnants, Munroe examines gardens and changes in gardening practices in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. These offered men and women new opportunities for social mobility. The study focuses on the developing gendered tension in gardening that grew out of a shift in the role of the garden as a means of feeding a family, to the garden as an aesthetic object and the accompanying status associated with such a symbol. An attention-worthy piece of research, unfortunately not aided by the poor quality black and white reproductions of engravings from the British Library.

## SEBRA PRINTS ANTIQUES PRINTS AND MAPS



'Polyanthus', colour woodcut by John Hall Thorpe, c.1920

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# Jottanda

## Nina Crone Award

The inaugural Nina Crone Award for Australian garden history writing was won by Joshua Small, a landscape architecture student from The University of New South Wales. His article 'The Colonial Farming Estate of Brownlow Hill' was selected from the twelve submissions received. The award commemorates the contribution of Nina Crone (1934–2007) to the Australian Garden History Society. The generosity of AGHS members and Nina's family means that it will continue to be awarded annually. The award aims to encourage new and emerging scholars in the writing of Australian garden history. Application details for 2009 will be on the Society's website: [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au).

## Dame Elisabeth Murdoch opens Cruden Farm

Cruden Farm, Langwarrin, Victoria, will be opened by our former Patron Dame Elisabeth Murdoch on Sunday, 1 March 2009 (11am to 4pm), to raise urgently needed funds for research into the causes and treatment of diabetes and heart disease at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne. For information and bookings contact Bernadette on 0418 352 066 or [crudenfarmday@brodribb.com.au](mailto:crudenfarmday@brodribb.com.au).

# Dialogue

## Professor Sadler and Rivenhall

Following publication her article in *AGH*, 20 (2), Colleen Morris notes that the simple explanation for the naming of Professor Sadler's home in Australia, Rivenhall, is that he was inspired by the architecture of Rivenhall (or nearby Rivenhall End) in Essex, England. However, there are further subtleties that could either be co-incidence or tell of a subtle commemoration of association. The land that Sadler purchased had been subdivided from a larger property called Upton Grey. This was also the name of the English estate owned by Charles Holme, who travelled to Japan in 1889 and was editor of *The Studio* magazine which he started in 1893. He was a founding member of the Japan Society of London (1891) and advocate for Japanese art in the West. Holme commissioned Gertrude Jekyll to design a garden at Upton Grey in 1908–09, at the time that Sadler sailed for Japan. Charles Holme died in 1923 and

## Keeping the Past Public: the documentation and conservation of modern places

An international symposium of lectures and panel discussions over two days (Wednesday, 4 February and Thursday, 5 February 2009), focusing on the challenges of documenting and conserving modern public places, urban sites, and landscapes. The symposium is being hosted by the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at The University of Melbourne. The event is generously sponsored and supported by the Australian Research Council, The University of Melbourne, the Australian Academy of Humanities, Docomomo Australia, the Heritage Council of Victoria, and the Ian Potter Foundation. For registration and more information visit

[www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/past-public](http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/past-public)

## Our next issue

*Australian Garden History*, volume 20 (4), April/May/June 2009, will be published on 1 April 2009. Deadline for copy is 15 February 2009. This issue will include a feature-length profile of a neglected Australian landscape designer of the interwar period, Hugh Linaker.

C.G. (Geoffrey) Holme took over the editing of *The Studio* and other publications by The Studio Limited. Among many books, in 1928 he edited and published *The Gardens of Japan* by Jiro Harada. C.G. Holme lived at the Old Rectory, Rivenhall, Essex.

## Review of *Gunyah, Goondie + Wurley*

In our last issue the type gremlins struck in the second paragraph of Richard Aitken's review of Paul Memmott's book *Gunyah, Goondie + Wurley*. The opening sentence of that paragraph was intended to read: 'At first I was slightly puzzled by the contrast between such sumptuous Western values and the exigent traditions of Australia's Aboriginal architecture—yet this was only momentary for the book is engrossing and the lavish treatment seems a fitting acknowledgement of the subject and its significance.'

# Diary dates

## FEBRUARY 2009

### *St Kilda Botanic Gardens*

Victoria

#### *Wednesday 11*

Guided walk through the gardens noted for the collection of rosarian Alister Clark's roses. 6.00pm at the Blessington Street and Tennyson Street corner. (Melway 2P, 10D) Invite your friends to join us for this free event. BYO picnic tea. Contact Bronwen Merrett on bronm@bigpond.net.au

### *Queensland Garden History*

Queensland

#### *Sunday 15*

Talk by Dr Jeannie Sim. Meet at 2pm at the Herbarium Conference room, Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens. Cost: \$10 members \$15 guests, includes refreshments. Register with Gill Jorgensen on (07) 3341 3933 or jorgenkg@picknowl.com.au.

### *Lost gardens walking tour*

Sydney

#### *Sunday 15*

Explore lost gardens of the CBD on this walking tour with Stuart Read, through Macquarie Place, The Palace Gardens, and Hyde Park. 2.30–4.30pm, starting at the 'Edge of the Trees' sculpture outside the Museum of Sydney. Cost: \$10 Members, \$15 Guests, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential, to Stuart Read on (02) 9326 9468 or stuart1962@bigpond.com.au or to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or Jeanne@Vilani.com



Dining room interpretation at Highfield House

## MARCH 2009

### *Alpha Cottage*

Western Australia

#### *Wednesday 11*

Talk on the Alpha Cottage by John Viska at Scotch College, Swanbourne.

For further details contact Caroline Grant on (08) 9384 3414 or grantspc@inet.net.au

### *Reconnecting with the Van Diemen's Land Company*

Tasmania

#### *Friday 20–Sunday 22*

Tour starting in Launceston, includes Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden, two nights in Stanley with guided tour of town and Highfield, and visit to Sisters Beach. Cost: various options re transport, accommodation, and meals. Inquiries and bookings to Rex Bean on (03) 6260 4418 or rex\_bean@bigpond.com

## APRIL 2009

### *Autumn in the North-East*

Victoria

#### *Friday 24–Sunday 26*

An all inclusive coach tour of gardens and landscapes in this historically rich area. John Patrick has kindly agreed to be our guide in Beechworth. Accommodation will be in the former Mayday Hills Hospital Manager's lodges or, for those who prefer their own facilities, double rooms are available in the nearby former Nurses Home, now an Art Deco hotel. Dinner on Friday evening will be in the lodges, while the dinner on Saturday night will be in the historic Bijoux Theatre. The booking form with details is inserted with this journal. Contact Mary Chapman on Mary.Chapman@melbourne.vic.gov.au



Highfield House in Stanley, north-western Tasmania

## APRIL–MAY 2009

### *Autumn in New England*

Northern New South Wales

#### *Sunday 26–Saturday 2 May*

Tour of historic houses and gardens in the New England region with Sarah and Clive Lucas and local AGHS member Lynne Walker. Departs from and returns to Sydney. For more information and booking forms contact the AGHS office on (03) 9650 5043, 1800 678 446. See article on pages 35–36 of this issue of *AGH*.

## OCTOBER 2009

### *Annual Conference, Geelong*

Victoria

#### *Friday 16–Sunday 18*

The pastoral legacy of Victoria's Western District plains will be explored in lectures and excursions at the Australian Garden History Society's 30th Annual National Conference. The Victorian Branch looks forward to welcoming you to Geelong, a city that was once the major exporter of wool to the world. Add these dates to your new diary!

# 2009 Autumn Tour

**Sunday 26 April – Saturday 2 May**



Trisha Dixon

## Armidale ... Gundagai ... Guyra ... Glen Innes ... Uralla ... Walcha

An all-inclusive seven day coach tour of some of New England's most interesting historical gardens and homesteads hosted by Sarah and Clive Lucas and local AGHS member, Lynne Walker.

Tour begins and ends in Sydney. Accommodation based at one of Armidale's premier motels, The Armidale Regency Hallmark Inn, with dinners at a number of renowned local eateries.

Tour price based on twin share:

- ▷ \$2200 for AGHS members,
- ▷ \$2300 non-members
- ▷ Single supplement \$330

For more information and booking forms contact the AGHS office

- ▷ Phone: **03 9650 5043** or **1800 678 446**
- ▷ Email: [info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au)



# *Autumn in New England: April 2009*

*Clive Lucas*

This AGHS tour, to be held from 26 April to 2 May 2009, is to be based in Armidale, NSW. En route we will stop off at Turanville, an old Dangar family property with lots of bunya pines, and on the way back Glenalvon, with its splendid garden and Horbury Hunt-designed stables. From our comfortable motel in Armidale we will visit such places as Abington Station—one of New England's best kept secrets—and Palmerston, another Dangar family house with its splendid Castleden-designed house. The trip takes us north to Glen Innes where we visit Stonehenge, evocatively depicted in a W. Lister Lister painting in the Australian Club in Sydney, with its wonderful avenue of elms and water meadow site. Another property with a great sense of landscape is Gostwyck with its grand approach and splendid outbuildings—comprising a sort of manorial village centred on the chapel and with connections to other houses with notable gardens such as Rouse Hill, and Bibury at Burradoo. No visit to Armidale can avoid the White pastoral dynasty and the family's favourite architect John Horbury Hunt. A dinner is proposed at their head station Saumarez and we will visit Booloominbah and St Peter's Cathedral. We will travel south east as far

as Walcha and visit Salisbury Court, where the same family has been since the 1840s—a property visited by Conrad Martens, perhaps the oldest ha-ha, and so on. We also visit Ohio, headquarters of another old New England clan—the Nivisons. All in all the tour should be wonderful and there is a lot to see.

Now, a little more detail on two of the properties, firstly Abington. This is a pastoral property on the western slopes of the New England tableland established in the 1830s and it has been owned by the Forster family for 120 years. Named Lochiel by John Cameron, the first owner, it was renamed Abington by the subsequent owner, Alexander Barlow (who was born at Abington Vicarage near Cambridge). In 1852 Barlow sold the 53,000-acre Abington to the Morse brothers. They brought with them hares and pheasants which they intended for sport, and planted hawthorn hedges on the flats and put up paling fences along the creek to keep their game birds safe. They also established a vineyard across the creek from the homestead and in 1876 were awarded a handsome bronze medal by the Agricultural Society of New South Wales for their wine. A trace of the old



This sketch by Conrad Martens, 'Salisbury Court, N. England' (dated 23 April 1852), documents the property of M. H. Marsh Esq., showing the homestead nestled comfortably in the landscape. It has been taken from a book of pencil sketches by Martens that record his travels in 1852 to south-east Queensland, New England, and the Hunter Valley, New South Wales.



Also taken from the book of pencil sketches by Martens that record his travels in 1852 to south-east Queensland, New England, and the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, this sketch, 'Salisbury Court, N. England' (dated 22 April 1852), details the homestead at Salisbury Court, the seat of M. H. Marsh Esq.

terraces where the vines grew can still be seen along the hillside.

The Abington homestead has been greatly enlarged from the house built by Alexander Barlow. The original house was plastered inside and had a shingled roof with a separate slab kitchen attached to the house by a covered walkway. The 'new' house was constructed from brick and had a corrugated iron roof, and was attached to the original by a shingle-roofed verandah. The garden of nearly an acre had a stream running through it with rustic bridges across it. The station buildings (stables, coach house, granary, pigeon house, store, and smithy) were behind the homestead and enclosed in a great stable yard.

F.R. White, who had commissioned the architect Horbury Hunt to design Booloominbah, purchased Abington from George Morse as settlement for his eldest daughter Kate, who in 1891 married Thomas Richmond Forster. The property at this time was 43,728 acres. T.R. Forster is considered the architect of modern Abington—he consolidated the run into a manageable shape, and supervised fencing and pasture improvement. It was his son who gifted Booloominbah to become what is now the University of New England.

The second property I will mention is Salisbury Court, which is the oldest house we will visit.

The garden at Salisbury Court was started in 1844 when Matthew Henry Marsh brought his bride Eliza Merewether to live in the house. Eliza mentioned in a letter home that 'the trees and vines had travelled well'. Five large oaks, an ash, a linden, an old pear tree, and the elms survive from the original planting. Matthew and Eliza's three daughters were born at Salisbury Court and when the family returned to England in 1855, Matthew's brother Charles, his wife, and nine children lived at Salisbury Court. It is thought the box hedges, black bamboo, Indian hawthorn hedge, japonica, the old blush China rose, and English woodbine date from this period.

Matthew and Eliza's grandson, Hugh Croft came to Australia in the 1890s to work for the Marsh Estates. Their daughter Georgiana had married Herbert Croft and Hugh was a younger son. In 1901, he married his cousin, Lucy Taylor, granddaughter of Charles and Janetta Marsh. Hugh, who inherited the family baronetcy, managed the Marsh Estates until 1922. Sir Hugh Croft died in 1954 and was succeeded by his son Bernard. Sir Bernard and his wife Helen planted crabapples, prunus, and ash trees in the paddock, the small box hedge, japonica hedge, the Atlantic cedar, much of the lilac, nandina, and other shrubs. The present baronet, Sir Owen and his wife Sally have rejuvenated the garden, and the place looks much as it did when Conrad Martens drew it in April 1852.



## Mission Statement

The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.